

2 *Stocking and Harvesting*

Prestocking Procedures

New Ponds. Plan construction so the pond is completed and filled by September or early October. Ponds filled in the summer may become contaminated with undesirable fish, which should be removed before stocking.

Existing Ponds. Restocking a pond usually requires eradicating existing fish populations (a process known as pond reclamation). Contact your Cooperative Extension Center or the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to determine if reclamation is necessary; sometimes the problem may be solved by other means. Pond reclamation may be required if undesirable species, such as crappies or bullheads, are found in the pond, and occasionally is necessary when fish populations become too unbalanced (for example, when there are too many sunfish and no bass). Undesirable fish populations are eliminated by using a fish toxicant called rotenone. Rotenone may be purchased from the Wildlife Resources Commission, and must be applied by a licensed pesticide applicator. Follow these steps when reclaiming a pond with rotenone:

1. Plan the reclamation for August or September. The water is warm at this time, and rotenone will detoxify quickly. This will also allow time for the pond to refill by fall when sunfish are normally restocked.
2. Prepare the pond by lowering the water to its lowest level. This reduces the amount of rotenone needed and concentrates the fish in a smaller area, ensuring a complete kill. Close the overflow pipe and check daily for leaks so that treated water will not escape and kill fish downstream.
3. Contact the Wildlife Resources Commission to obtain rotenone. After treatment, most fish will die and come to the surface within 24 hours, although fish may continue to appear for several days. Rotenone is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for human consumption, and therefore the poisoned fish should not be eaten by humans or livestock. Bury them to prevent odors and pest problems.
4. Allow at least 10 days for the rotenone to break down (detoxify) naturally. In warm water (65° to 70°F) the rotenone should be gone in about 4 days. The treated water should not be used for watering livestock for at least 10 days and should not be released from the pond for at least 2 weeks after application. Fish may be stocked 2 weeks after treatment.